



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

February 24, 2014

Thomas E. Torkelson  
IDEA Public Schools  
505 Angelita Drive Suite 9  
Weslaco, TX 78596

Dear Chief Executive Officer Torkelson:

I am writing in response to IDEA's Race to the Top – District amendment request. Between April 8, 2013 and February 21, 2014, the grantee submitted amendment requests to the U.S. Department of Education (Department). On March 27, 2013, the Department provided the "Scope of Work Grant Amendment Submission Process" document to grantee local educational agencies (LEAs) indicating the process by which amendments would be reviewed and approved or denied during the Race to the Top-District scope of work review process. To determine whether approval could be granted, the Department has applied the conditions noted in the document, and compared it with the Race to the Top – District *Principles*, which are also included in that document.

I approve the following amendments, with the condition outlined below:

- IDEA's initial budget did not allocate the full 2.318% indirect cost rate set by the Texas Education Agency in several projects. Therefore, IDEA has updated the budget accordingly. In addition, IDEA has chosen to align its Race to the Top – District grant year (December 27– December 26) with its district fiscal calendar (July 1 – June 30). Therefore, shift all funds that were budgeted for use between June 30 and December 27 in each grant year to the following grant year. IDEA has made several adjustments to project budgets as a result of these changes. Please see the attached Appendix A for a description of these shifts.
- In Project 1: iLearning Hotspot Lab and AR Zone Access After School and/or on Weekends, delay the launch of Learning HotSpot Lab from school year (SY) 2012-2013 until SY 2013-2014 to allow additional time for planning

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and development. As a result, shift \$28,080 Year 1 personnel stipends for HotSpot Facilitators and IT support persons to Years 2-4. Decrease the number of IT support persons from 26 new positions to 7 existing positions with the support of two leadership roles in Years 2-4 based on an updated assessment of project needs and existing resources. Increase the number of campuses supported by this initiative from 13 to 14. As a result of these changes, \$305,506 in Years 2-4 is available to support other amendments included in this letter.

- In Project 5: Re-imagined Secondary Intervention and Acceleration Model, make strategic shifts to personnel:
  - Reduce the number of support positions based an updated assessment of project needs.
  - Rather than hire IT support specialists, leverage existing staff and support 90 percent rather than 100 percent of FTE with these funds.
  - No use of personnel funds for IT support specialists in Year 1 due to the alignment of IDEA's budget years to the district's fiscal years, resulting in a shorter Year 1 timeline than originally proposed.

As a result of these changes, \$1,259,032 in Years 2-4 is available to support other amendments included in this letter.

- In Project 5: Re-imagined Secondary Intervention and Acceleration Model, add \$1,177,500 to contractual funds in Years 1-4 to purchase licenses for adaptive software supporting math and English Language Arts (ELA). These changes are based on:
  - An updated assessment of the number of students being served at each campus;
  - Support to an additional IDEA campus; and
  - Additional funds to support the fall semester in 2016.

These funds are made available by other amendments included in this letter.

- Merge the work of Project 8: Data Integration Leadership with Project 10: Learning Lab Facilitator Pathway to Leadership to leverage data and develop staff ability to individualize instruction. Projects 8 and 10 address the same goals and merging the two allows IDEA to better utilize resources. IDEA combined budgets from Project 8 and 10 into one budget. All budget changes associated with this work are described in Appendix A.
- Add Allan Academy and College Prep to the list of participating schools receiving grant funds.

These amendments are approved with the conditions outlined below:

- According to the Race to the Top – District FY 2012 Notice Inviting Applications (NIA), grantees are required to set ambitious yet achievable

annual goals that are equal to or exceed the State Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) targets for the LEA(s), overall and by student subgroup (as defined in the NIA), for each participating LEA. On September 30, 2013, the Department approved Texas' request for ESEA Flexibility. Therefore, IDEA must submit revised annual goals for each participating LEA that are aligned with the Texas' approved request for ESEA Flexibility and in accordance with the Race to the Top – District NIA no later than March 7, 2014.

- In accordance with the FY2012 Notice Inviting Applications, IDEA must submit annual targets for all sub-groups for (A)(4)(c): Graduation rates and (A)(4)(d): College enrollment rates no later than March 7, 2014.

It is our understanding that this amendment will not substantially change the scope and objectives of the work. Please note that this letter will be posted on the Department's website as a record of the amendment.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding Race to the Top-District, please do not hesitate to contact IDEA's Race to the Top-District Program Officer, Loveen Bains, at 202-453-5999 or [Loveen.Bains@ed.gov](mailto:Loveen.Bains@ed.gov).

Sincerely,

//s//

Ann Whalen  
Director, Policy and Program Implementation  
Implementation and Support Unit

cc: Emily Pyeatt

## Appendix A

Project affected	Description of change
Project 1: iLearning Hotspot Lab and AR Zone Access After School and/or on Weekends	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Add a Director of Individualized Learning to lead implementation of Project 1 in Years 2-4. This results in a cost increase of \$13,488 in personnel funds (to pay for 5% of this salary) from funds made available by other amendments included in this letter; and</li> <li>2) Delay by several months procuring software licenses for parents to complete personalized online learning. This delay is due to the alignment of IDEA's budget years to the district's fiscal years, resulting in a shorter Year 1 timeline than originally proposed. Therefore, shift Year 1 contractual funds to Years 2-4 for software licenses. As a result of this change, \$3,750 in Years 2-4 is available to support other amendments included in this letter.</li> </ol>
Project 2: Accelerated Reading Zone: Personalized Book Selection	<p>Add funds in Year 2 to purchase books, resulting in an increase of \$285,818 in supplies. IDEA found this to be a useful investment in Year 1 and is therefore supporting the purchase of additional books in Year 2 with funds made available by other amendments included in this letter.</p>
Project 3: New Reading Approach in Blended Learning Labs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Reduce the number of HotSpot Learning Facilitators from 20 to 14 per campus and remove the additional IT support position based on an updated assessment of project needs for personnel in Years 2-4. As a result of these changes, \$129,600 in Years 2-4 is available to support other amendments included in this letter; and</li> <li>2) Add \$70,000 in Year 2 contractual funds for infrastructure upgrades (e.g., electrical and internet) at pilot campuses to support project implementation. These funds are made available by other amendments included in this letter.</li> </ol>
Project 4: Online AP/Electives Re: Deep Learning Interests	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) As a result of an updated assessment of project needs in personnel in Years 2-4 and to leverage existing resources and staff, make the following changes:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Delay hiring the Coordinator of Online Electives and AP Courses position from Years 1 to Year 3;</li> <li>○ Utilize 10 percent of the ELA Coordinator's time to provide leadership in Year 2; and</li> <li>○ Utilize 10 percent of the Director of Secondary Programs' time to provide</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

Project affected	Description of change
	<p>additional support in Years 2-4.</p> <p>As a result of these changes, \$31,182 in Years 2-4 is available to support other amendments included in this letter.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2) Add textbooks and supplies for students participating in online courses in Years 2-4 for a total of \$150,000 in supplies. IDEA has found students require books and other supplies in order to complete online coursework. The purchase of supplies in Year 2 is supported with funds made available by other amendments included in this letter; and</li> <li>3) Re-calculate contractual costs for online courses in Years 2-4 by estimating the total cost based on the number of courses offered rather than by student because some students participate in more than one course per year. This will allow IDEA to accurately account for the total number of students enrolled in online courses. As a result of these changes, \$600,000 in Years 2-4 is available to support other amendments included in this letter.</li> </ol>
Project 6: Summer Institute for Credit Recover and Acceleration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Add \$40,000 in personnel training stipends in Years 2-4 for teachers who will participate in the Summer Institute. This work was originally proposed but not funded under Race to the Top – District previously. These personnel costs are supported with funds made available by other amendments included in this letter; and</li> <li>2) Add \$117,846 in fringe benefits inadvertently left out of IDEA’s original budget request. These fringe benefits are supported with funds made available by other amendments included in this letter.</li> </ol>
Project 7: Lightbulb: Actionable Dashboard Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) As a result of an updated assessment of project needs in for personnel Years 2-4 and to leverage existing resources and staff, make the following changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reduce the amount of time allocated by one IT Developer from 100 percent to 50 percent;</li> <li>○ Shift responsibilities from the originally proposed Advanced Curriculum Specialist to other existing IDEA staff.</li> </ul> <p>As a result of these changes, \$269,364 in Years 2-4 is available to support other amendments in this letter; and</p> </li> <li>2) Shift \$180,000 in contractual funds for Lightbulb software licenses from Years 1 to Years 2-4 due to an updated assessment of project needs and the alignment of IDEA’s budget</li> </ol>

Project affected	Description of change
	<p>years to the district's fiscal years, resulting in a shorter Year 1 timeline than originally proposed. These contractual costs are supported with funds made available by other amendments included in this letter.</p>
<p>Project 8: Data Integration Leadership</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Due to an updated assessment of project needs, IDEA will hire one Data Coach in Year 2, seven Data Coaches in Year 3, and seven Data Coaches in Year 4 rather than the six and a half Data Coaches per year in Years 2-4 as originally proposed. As a result of this change, \$90,937 in Years 2-4 is available to support other amendments in this letter;</li> <li>2) Add \$11,200 in personnel funds for Data Coaches to participate in trainings instead of originally proposed HotSpot Facilitators. Data Coaches will replace the HotSpot Facilitators to receive this training as Data Coaches will lead IDEA's strategic efforts to link data to instruction and assessment. These trainings will occur during non-contracted times or weekends, thereby increasing costs. In addition, add \$5,160 in personnel funds will be used as stipends for IDEA faculty members to lead the Data Leadership Pathway program for the Data Coaches. These personnel costs are supported with funds made available by other amendments included in this letter;</li> <li>3) Add \$60,000 in personnel for current IDEA Central Office staff in Year 2 to be trained to support and collaborate with Data Coaches based. These personnel costs are based on an updated assessment of project needs and supported with funds made available by other amendments included in this letter; and</li> <li>4) Add \$31,500 in technology supplies in Year 3 for Data Coaches to successfully fulfill their position requirements. In addition, add \$34,326 supplies (e.g., course materials) to execute the Data Coaches training in Years 3-4. These supplies are based on an updated assessment of project needs and supported with funds made available by other amendments included in this letter.</li> </ol>
<p>Project 9: On-Demand Professional Development for Personalized Learning Environments</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Replace the originally proposed role of the Curriculum Coordinator in Year 2 with existing IDEA personnel based on an updated assessment of project needs and to leverage existing resources and staff. IDEA will add funds to support 15 percent of the Development Support Specialist, 10 percent of the Instructional Support Specialist, and 5 percent of the Director of Software Development in Year 2; and</li> <li>2) Add a video server in Year 2 to host on-demand professional development content to</li> </ol>

Project affected	Description of change
	<p>ensure content is stored and always available for IDEA staff, resulting in a cost increase of \$74,680 in equipment. Any costs exceeding the budgeted amount will be funded from IDEA's general operating funds. These equipment costs are supported with funds made available by other amendments included in this letter.</p>
<p>Project 12: Automation/Integration of Observation and Feedback Tools</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Make strategic shifts to personnel due to the alignment of IDEA's budget years to the district's fiscal years, resulting in a shorter Year 1 timeline than originally proposed and leverage expertise of existing staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Add existing IDEA personnel in Year 2; and</li> <li>○ Delay the hiring of the IT Support Specialist from Year 1 to Year 3.</li> </ul> <p>As a result of these changes, \$47,242 in Years 2-4 is available to support other amendments in this letter;</p> </li> <li>2) Add a high-quality technology application for observations and feedback to teachers, integrated into IDEA's technology and data systems. Originally IDEA proposed to develop a high-quality application for observations of and providing feedback to teachers. After extensive research, purchasing an application will allow IDEA to improve the quality and timeliness of feedback provided to teachers. As a result of this change, \$370,000 in Years 2-4 is available to support other amendments in this letter.</li> <li>3) Add a \$50,000 contractual agreement for data integration to facilitate the integration of the observation and feedback application described above. These contractual costs are supported with funds made available by other amendments in this letter.</li> </ol>
<p>Project 14: Video Exemplars for Teachers</p>	<p>Based on an updated assessment of project needs, shift personnel costs for IT Developer from Years 1-4 to Years 2-3. There are no budget implications for this change.</p>
<p>Project 15, Collective Impact Community Partnerships</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Replace the originally proposed three Regional Community Partnership Coordinators FTEs and associated travel costs in Years 2-4 with one Director FTE and one Coordinator FTE plus travel costs in Years 2-4, based an updated assessment of project needs. As a result, \$54,177 is available to support other amendments in this letter; and</li> <li>2) Increase the number of campuses within the Expansion of Communities in School Partnerships from 8 to 12 in Years 2-4 to ensure the success of this project. In addition, other community partnerships will support 14 campuses, instead of the originally proposed 13. As a result of these changes and re-estimation of contractual costs there is</li> </ol>

Project affected	Description of change
	a net savings of \$450,000 to support other amendments in this letter.
Project 16, Grant Management and Evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Shift personnel funds for Race to the Top – Grant Director and Administrative Administrator from Years 1 to Years 2-4 due to the alignment of IDEA’s budget years to the district’s fiscal years, resulting in a shorter Year 1 timeline than originally proposed. In addition, fringe benefits and travel for these two positions were re-estimated. As a result, \$59,778 is available to support other amendments in this letter; and</li> <li>2) Add \$180,000 in contractual funds to receive services from a third party provider for on-going strategic and technical assistance to support grant implementation in Years 1-4 based on an updated assessment of project needs. These contractual costs are supported with funds made available by other amendments in this letter.</li> </ol>